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REMARKS

Claims 1 and 8-24 remain in this application and are rejected. Claims 2-7 are previously cancelled. Claims 1, 12 and 13 are amended herein to clarify the invention and the changes are considered unrelated to substantive patentability issues.

No new issues are raised by the changes to claims 1, 12 and 13 because the features added to these claims are set forth in claims which have been considered by the Examiner, e.g., claims 14-17.

Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C §112

Claims 1 and 8-24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, on the grounds that the phrase "in a diagonal direction" in claims 1, 12 and 13 is ambiguous.

The Examiner's rejection is respectfully traversed on the grounds that the feature relating to the diagonal direction was described in alternative language as it relates to the effective lines. That is, as previously set forth in claims 1, 12 and 13, the dividend is produced or a previously produced dividend is changed when a maximum number of the effective lines in the matrix are selected and a predetermined combination is formed by the cards on the maximum number of the effective lines at least "in a diagonal direction or in a direction perpendicular to the effective lines" (emphasis added). The alternative language relates to two possible directions relative "to the effective lines" on which the predetermined combination

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can lie, namely: A) in a diagonal direction thereto or B) in a direction perpendicular thereto. To clarify this feature, claims 1, 12 and 13 are amended to recite that the dividend is produced or a previously produced dividend is changed when a maximum number of the effective lines in the matrix are selected and a predetermined combination is formed by the cards on the maximum number of the effective lines at least "in a diagonal direction to the effective lines or in a direction perpendicular to the effective lines".

No new issue is raised by the changes to claims 1, 12 and 13 in view of the fact that previously presented claim 15 sets forth an embodiment wherein the effective lines are in a horizontal direction and the predetermined combination to obtain a dividend must be in either a diagonal direction or the vertical direction whereas previously presented claim 17 sets forth an embodiment wherein the effective lines are in a vertical direction and the predetermined combination to obtain a dividend is in either a diagonal direction or the horizontal direction.

Thus, embodiments wherein the effective lines in a different direction than the line(s) on which the predetermined combination must be set forth to obtain a dividend or change in dividend have been considered by the Examiner.

In view of the changes to claims 1, 12 and 13, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejection of claims 1, 12 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, has been overcome and should be removed.

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Claim Rejections-35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1 and 8-24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Yoshihito (Japanese Publication No. 09-220,369) in view of Moody (U.S. Pat. No. 6,098,985).

The Examiner's rejection is respectfully traversed on the grounds that Yoshihito and Moody do not disclose a game system including all of the features of independent claim 1 and the game control method and storage medium of independent claims 12 and 13, respectively.

Specifically, claim 1 now includes the features of the effective lines being set in only one direction of either a vertical direction or a horizontal direction of the matrix (which feature was previously set forth in claims 14 and 16), and the dividend controlling device being arranged to produce the dividend when a successful hand is formed on any of the effective lines and also to produce the dividend or change a previously produced dividend when a maximum number of the effective lines in the matrix are selected and a predetermined combination is formed by the cards on the maximum number of the effective lines, at least in a diagonal direction to the effective lines or in a direction perpendicular to the effective lines (which feature was previously set forth in claims 15 and 17). Claims 12 and 13 include similar features.

With these features, in a game system in accordance with the invention, though the direction of effective lines is only a vertical direction or a horizontal

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direction, the dividend can be produced based on the cards not only on the effective lines (i.e., in a vertical direction or a horizontal direction) but also on lines different in direction from the direction of the effective lines (i.e., in a diagonal direction of the matrix or in a direction perpendicular to the effective lines). For example, if the effective lines are only horizontal (claim 14), the dividend is produced when certain cards are on a line diagonal to the horizontal line or a vertical line (claim 15).

Therefore, even if a successful hand is not formed on each of the effective lines, a dividend can be produced if the predetermined combination in the direction different from the direction of the effective lines is formed. Accordingly, the present invention can enhance surprise and accidental performance for a dividend.

Yoshihito and Moody do not disclose a game system which enables a player to obtain a dividend on a combination of symbols in a line which has not been set or bet upon as set forth in claims 1, 12 and 13.

Yoshihito describes a game apparatus which determines a prize-winning hand when a predetermined combination is formed by the cards on the screen (see Fig. 6). However, Yoshihito fails to disclose that the effective lines can be selected by a player. As the game of Yoshihito does not need the effective lines to be selected by the player, it is apparent that the effective lines are not derived by Yoshihito.

Moody describes the card game where the award to the player is based on any winning combination only on a pay line or bet line (column 10, lines 33-34).

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Yoshihito and Moody fail to disclose, teach or suggest that a dividend can be produced based on a combination of the cards on a line having a direction different from the direction of the effective lines (e.g., a diagonal line or vertical line when the effective lines are horizontal (as set forth in claim 15) and a diagonal line or horizontal line when the effective lines are vertical (as set forth in claim 17)). While the direction of the effective lines may be horizontal, vertical or diagonal, if Yoshihito is combined with Moody in the manner suggested by the Examiner (see page 4 of the Office Action, paragraph d), the references do not disclose, teach or suggest enabling a dividend based on a combination of cards along a line which has a different direction than the direction of the effective lines, e.g., the effective lines are horizontal or vertical and a combination along a line diagonal or perpendicular to the effective lines provides a dividend.

Since Yoshihito and Moody do not include all of the features of claims 1, 12 and 13, one skilled in the art could not combine features of the references and arrive at the embodiments of the invention set forth in claims 1 and 8-24.

Moreover, claims 14-17 specify the alternative embodiments of claim 1 wherein it is clearly set forth that the effective lines are not diagonal lines so that these claims expressly relate to embodiments wherein the effective lines and the "non-bet" lines are in different directions.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's rejection of claims 1 and 8-24 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over

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Yoshihito in view of Moody has therefore been overcome and should be removed and the present application should be in condition for allowance.

In light of the foregoing, the application is now believed to be in proper form for allowance of all claims and notice to that effect is earnestly solicited. Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 10-1250.

Respectfully submitted,
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